Chapter II

MAN AND WORLD

771 Bang Chan had for years heard preaching from Buddhist scriptures. Co-existing with these teachings were Hindu elements referring to Brahma, Shiva, and others. People [192] also believed in an animistic lore concerning frightening ghosts and spirits (phī), protecting deities (thēwadā), maternal goddesses, princely spirit-lords, and other supernatural guardians of a more or less benevolent nature. To these beliefs were added special bodies of knowledge, such as sacred literature from India and traditions of astrology from both China[8] and India. Other elements might be traced to Muslim influence, just as Muslims shared some of the foregoing references with their Buddhist neighbors. Bang Chan shaped its views of nature and man from all these sources. However, we shall not try in what follows to specify the sources of its beliefs.

826 774 184 192 ### The Human Body

The body of flesh, blood, bones, and other materials, harbored the noncorporeal aspects, in particular a person's merit store (kam; Skr: karma) and his several souls, viz., the Khwan, the winyan, and the four chettaphūt (cf. J.R. Hanks, 1959). Views of the human body formed no unitary system, but were as varied as their origins. Thus, sometimes villagers distinguished the material from the non-material: "a human being is composed of two aspects: rūp (body) and arūp (non-body)." Sometimes learned persons referred to the Hindu-Buddhist concept of 32 parts of the body, one of which, the winyān-soul, was the "organizer" of the others.

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8. No trace was discovered of the Chinese concept of Yin as female, dark, cold, and evil, etc., and Yang as its opposite.

[115] 9. Ming (Mc.F. 880) was once given as a term for "soul" by a Muslim informant, but without further information.

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The genetic connections of those who did not help in cash or labor at, say, cremations or cooperative work-parties were forgotten. Degree of help was a measure of kinship solidarity, and even marked the outer boundaries of kinship.

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The word "help" turned up over and over again in the context of childbirth. Birth came about because a married couple, already steeped in the knowledge that they had been so helped by their parents, "helped another individual to new life" through the mingling of semen and blood. The midwife's role was merely to "help." When a woman engaged a midwife, her words were, "Will you come to help me?" A baby having trouble breathing right after delivery "had to be helped for half an hour." Most important, only through the reciprocal help of mother and child was rebirth to earthly life implemented at all. Parturition was an active, cooperative venture between 2 autonomous beings. The child set the time for labor to start by "deciding to be born" when his 32 parts were "complete,"[38] and he had worked off sufficient sin in purgatory to permit rebirth. The mother by her labor "helped the child to be born," but she could not succeed unless he actively "helped," too. Though other assistance to her was desirable, such as persons to support her back and press out the infant, only his help was essential. Without it she had a hard or unsuccessful labor. A woman who gave birth successfully without outside help created no stir because it was evident that the baby had been helpful.

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38. Informants were not uniform in opinion here. Some said the khwan (or winyan) was the first "part" to establish itself--arriving at the moment of conception--others that it was the last (Textor:262). In either case it was highly volatile during pregnancy, and the trapping by winnowing at birth was the major means of rooting it in the person. During pregnancy, medicine for wind in the fetus was given "which was not effective if there were no khwan," but whether the khwan was the mother's or the child's was not certain.

4:Phillips E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1966
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Bang Chan

858 828 child is clearly a social inferior, and is due all the prerogatives of his position: he is to be dealt with gently, kindly, and benevolently, with sympathetic regard for his incompetence; correlatively, he must be taught to express deference and obedience to superiors. Rather, the equality awarded the child results from the recognition that in the workings of the cosmic scale it is impossible to ascertain what the child could once have been or eventually will become, and he, like any soul, is always *potentially* of the same value as any other person. It is precisely for this reason that most Bang Chaners, if they mention it at all, are only mildly pleased rather than particularly proud that one of their own grew up to become an admiral in the Thai Navy. It comes as no great surprise that such a thing can happen. To them, it is no more unusual than that the prime minister himself should be a person who was born and reared in a village. (By the same token, the peasant background of these two individuals creates no special sense of personal identification with them on the part of the villagers. They are perceived simply as two unique *individuals*, their peasant roots being viewed as only one of the literally countless factors that made them what they are today.)[27] To a large extent, the equality of the child derives from the premise that he is not so much a child as he is a human being who happens to be at a particular stage in his ontological

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time). When probed further and asked if their parents' training may have had any influence on these individuals, they replied "yes" and "maybe" in the case of the admiral, but disavowed all parental influence in the case of the *nagkleeng*. A few said that the *nagkleeng* became that way because of bad friends.

One villager, phrasing his comment as a personal conjecture, volunteered that the notion of parents being the major influence on a child's character is a "modern" idea. Another informant, the wife of a school teacher and well versed in her husband's teaching training manual (prepared in Bangkok by Western-trained educators) argued that a person's character is dependent "mostly on the influence of the home and school." However, since on other occasions she complained to me that one of her sons "does not have an *ʔupanidsaj* for studying, and there is nothing a parent can do but let the child have his own way," it would suggest that her commitment to the pronouncements of her husband's mentors was not too well internalized.

To avoid confusion, it might be added that from a historical point of view only one of the above cosmological forces (*kam*) is strictly Buddhistic in origin. The others are either Brahmanic (*khwaan* and *phroomlʔkhid*) or traditionally Thai (*ʔupanidsaj*, *winjaan*, and *caj*). Of all the terms, *kam* and *ʔupanidsaj* are the ones most frequently referred to when discussing an individual's character.

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[27] It is precisely for this reason, as I indicated in an earlier writing on Thai social structure (see Sharp *et al.* 1956: 163) that Thai society "cannot be said to have a class system in the classical European sense of the term." People identify with others as individuals, not as representatives of social classes.

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The very fact that individual peasant boys can climb the social ladder to attain some of the highest social positions of the land, without it even being considered particularly noteworthy, attests to the fundamental equalitarian nature of the ideas underlying the Thai social system despite the obvious emphasis given to status and hierarchy in individual face-to-face relationships.

4:Phillips E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1966
AO7 Central Thai AO7
Bang Chan

123 friends" never numbered more than eight or ten people, out of a total population of 1,771.) Although their opinions differed in detail and covered a considerable range, they seemed to agree that I had a *good heart*. One villager said that he knew I had a good heart because children like me, "and children are only attracted to people who have good hearts." On the other hand, another more critical person said that my personality was just like that of a child, "because he always shows his feelings. He does not know how to be cool." The contrasts the villagers saw between myself and other researchers were particularly instructive. Of another field worker, an informant said: "he is not a kind person like *Aacaan* Herb, but he knows how to treat people in the Thai way. *Aacaan* Herb does not know how. He laughs too loud and does not use flattering words. He does not help me as much as the other person either." Yet, in contrast, another villager said: "I like *Aacaan* Herb because he likes me. He tells funny stories. He is not like some of the other *farang* who leave as soon as they get information from you."

123 The ultimate importance of these personal assessments are not easily
124 determined. One villager perceptively noted, for example, that although
[115] the "boss" of the Cornell team was a "good person," it really did not make any difference whether he was good or bad "because he is the 'boss' and bosses have to be respected." Of more direct relevance to the research was
[125] the fact that those individuals whom I counted among my warmest friends were not necessarily my best informants; in fact, some became inordinately anxious and evasive while taking the Sentence Completion Test and TAT. On the other hand, some villagers whom I had never seen before responded to these tasks with obvious enthusiasm. Even the villager who complained about my having wasted his time was a good informant, in the sense of appearing stimulated by and genuinely involved in responding to the sentence cues. It is clear, however, that villagers who liked me were the most approachable of informants, and were more ready, at least initially, to acquiesce to interview requests. The crucial factor here may well be the difference between responding to the field worker versus responding to the research; that is, even though all the respondents were originally induced into being interviewed as a favor to me—and their willingness was in part a function of how much they liked me—such favors did not necessarily carry over to the substantive purposes of the interview: reacting to my queries in a concerned and committed way. Thus, some informants went through the entire interview experience carefully fulfilling the interpersonal "obligation" but all but ignoring its content; others were so stimulated by the content that their initial attitudes toward me, positive or negative, became largely irrelevant. The vast majority of informants of course fell between these two extremes; and in no case were either the interpersonal or substan-

7: Janlekha X-4,5 (1948-1953)1956 AO7 Central Thai AO7
Bangchan

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Table 28 shows estimated prices of land in Bangchan in 1948 and in 1953. These prices are estimates made by our informant who is a son of Hajji Sa-ard mentioned in an earlier paragraph. He is one of the best informed persons in the village, has visited Mecca, and has received a higher education than any other person in Bangchan with the possible exception of one store-keeper who had spent a few years in the Military Academy in the 1910's.

Our informant, who will henceforth be called by his real name -- Hajji Direg, based his estimates of land prices in Bangchan on what he was willing to pay. He was aware of locational variation in prices of land in the village. Strictly speaking, this is not contradictory to our assumption of homogeneous nature of soils in Bangchan; for slight variation in Direg's estimated prices was due, according to him, to differences in the land levels which affected the cost of irrigation and drainage. Direg divided Bangchan into seven land-price zones (Table 28 and Map I). It is seen in this table that the 1948 price ranged from 200 baht per rai in Zone 7 to 300 baht per rai in Zone 1, averaging 249 baht per rai.

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Table 28 shows that the average price of agricultural land in Bangchan rose from 240 baht per rai in 1948 to 1,583 baht in 1953, an increase of more than five times in six years. Most remarkable was the increase of the price of land in Zone 1 from 300 baht per rai to 12,000 baht per rai. The increase in the price of land in Zone 1 shows that land

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 163]

243 594 461 [464] row man. He could not very well be substituted by his younger sister who was also needed to perform the housework. A worker was thus hired for the period of two months -- from the middle of June to the middle of August -- primarily to help in plowing. Phan also partially helped in plowing and harrowing in part of the morning session before he started his work for the Cornell team at nine o'clock.

[496] During the cooperative work season, Chom represented the family in cooperative uprooting and cooperative harvesting, and Phuan in cooperative transplanting, weeding and harvesting. Phan also represented the family in cooperative work scheduled for Saturdays and Sundays when he was free from Cornell duty.

243 461 128 Work records of all workers of this farm were kept by the author throughout the work season from June 4, 1953 to February 14, 1954. At the beginning, the author stayed overnight with the family. Family workers were requested to give accounts of their activities of the day. To facilitate more accurate accounts regarding the time of the work, a clock was [115] given to the family. When family workers became acquainted with the type of information that was needed, Phan, our row man, was assigned to make a daily report on the kinds and time of work done by each worker. Phan's daily report was taken down by the author in the labor schedule specially prepared for the purpose.[3] Later, when Phan's reporting skill was well developed, he was asked to report on the daily labor records only four times a week, usually Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday.

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3. See Appendix B.